



Town of La Conner

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028

Updated for 2025



BERK

Introduction and Purpose

Welcome to the Town of La Conner's Strategic Plan! Like many communities, La Conner is in a period of transition. Regional growth brings many short- and long-term opportunities and challenges, and as a small community, we recognize that we can't "do it all." Given these real-world constraints, this Strategic Plan describes our desired future and how we will focus our efforts over the coming five years, reflecting what we've heard from the community about what matters most.

The Implementation Framework described in this document will guide an ongoing conversation among Councilmembers, staff, and community members to ensure that decision-making throughout the next five years is grounded in the ideas identified in this Plan.

Our Desired Future

Our desired future for La Conner as a community and as a Town government emphasizes its current strengths as a welcoming, small community and expands the affordability and inclusivity of our town. We envision the future of La Conner as:

Welcoming and affordable to all ages. We seek to cultivate a community that is inviting, affordable, and safe for people at all stages of life, including children, young families, and older adults.

Safe and supportive. La Conner residents know their neighbors, and we seek to preserve a safe and supportive community for all residents and visitors.

Balanced. We welcome both newcomers and our long-term residents and seek a balance between growth and maintaining what we love about our community.

Vibrant and authentic. We aim to maintain our identity as a lively small town with a strong community feel. We strive to cultivate a community of neighborhoods that offer meaningful activities and uses for residents and visitors alike.

Engaged and collaborative. We seek to engage our community members in decision-making and volunteer opportunities, and we seek partnerships and opportunities to support our local businesses and industry.

Self-reliant. We strive to offer resources and amenities that serve the needs of our residents and visitors and offer safe, convenient transportation to our neighboring communities for resources not available in town. In the face of a changing climate, we aim to expand our energy-efficiency and our ability to generate our own renewable energy.

Our Focus Areas

Goals, First Steps, and Priorities

The following sections describe our five Focus Areas for this Strategic Plan:

- 1. A Robust, Affordable, and Inclusive Economy.** Offer an attainable cost-of-living and strong economy that support existing residents and invite new residents to call La Conner home.
- 2. Public Safety.** Cultivate a safe community and a sense of safety among community members.
- 3. Climate and Environmental Sustainability.** Strengthen our ability to respond to and address a changing climate.
- 4. Capital Projects and Utilities.** Ensure the Town's infrastructure supports our community.
- 5. An Effective Town Organization.** Support our desired future and the above goals through effective, efficient, and sustainable administration.

Each Focus Area includes multiple Goals that describe the primary efforts we will take in pursuit of our desired future. We have also identified a First Step we will take toward reaching each Goal. In recognition that we will not be able to advance all these Goals at once, we have noted which Goals we aim to advance in 2024, the next year of Strategic Plan implementation.

1. A Robust, Affordable, and Inclusive Economy

A. Facilitate increased housing diversity and affordability.

First Step: Develop and implement a Housing Strategy with a strong focus on partnerships.

B. Leverage City plans and regulations to facilitate development in line with community desires.

First Step **2024**: Update our Comprehensive Plan, including zoning and codes.

C. Support the regional agricultural industry.

First Step: Identify appropriate roles for the Town, potentially including hosting a farmers market.

D. Partner with the Port of Skagit to develop Port-owned properties.

First Step: Expand our engagement and partnership with Port Commissioners.

E. Create an Economic Development Plan.

F. Explore the development of a artist/farmer's market.

First Step: Identify public and private partners.

2. Public Safety

A. Make needed capital investments in fire protection and prevention.

First Step **2024**: Purchase a fire boat.

B. Strengthen our ability to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.

First Step: Develop a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

C. Explore opportunities for staff and the public to contribute to public safety.

First Step **2025**: Consider opportunities for volunteers to support public safety efforts.

D. Plan for the replacement of the town's first-out fire engine.

3. First Step: Define the attributes of a replacement engine. Climate and Environmental Sustainability

A. Develop and implement plans for climate resiliency.

First Step **2024**: Create a climate resiliency element of the Comprehensive Plan, including hydrology modeling.

B. Pursue opportunities for energy self-reliance by investing in sustainable and renewable energy.

First Step **2025**: Identify opportunities to invest in solar demonstration projects.

4. Capital Projects and Utilities

A. Improve mobility and safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, especially in our downtown district and on Maple Ave.

First Step **2024**: Identify engineering and grant opportunities for 1st St Right of Way projects.

B. Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

First Step **2024**: Study next steps for needed improvements.

C. Determine the best future for our Public Works shop.

First Step **2024**: Evaluate opportunities for collaboration with the Port of Skagit or a potential merger of our Public Works departments. Identify a site for a shop, potentially collocated with a partner.

D. Explore options for the reduction of building maintenance costs.

First Step: Consider moving town offices to Maple Center.

5. An Effective Town Organization

A. Enhance community engagement and communications.

First Step: Study other Towns' models of engagement. Consider listening sessions, social media engagement, engagement by existing channels, and enhanced opportunities for direct engagement with Councilmembers.

B. Recruit and retain highly skilled staff.

First Step **2024**: Engage consultant support to conduct a salary review and develop career paths.

C. Improve interdepartmental communications and cooperation.

First Step **2025**: Begin use of the asset management program.

D. Support Town financial sustainability.

First Step: Engage a grant writer.

E. Partner with other organizations to sponsor a new community event.

First Step: Identify potential events that would be attractive to residents and visitors.

Implementation Framework

This Strategic Plan will serve as a reference to guide our efforts over the coming five years. Each year during the life of this Plan, we will develop a workplan to operationalize the ideas outlined in this document. The process outlined below describes this annual process.

Throughout the lifetime of this plan, we'll engage our partners and community members to ensure all stakeholders are aware of our priorities and opportunities to engage. And we will ensure other planning opportunities such as the 2025 update to our Comprehensive Plan will align with and draw from this strategic plan.

Annual Implementation Process



Source: BERK, 2023.